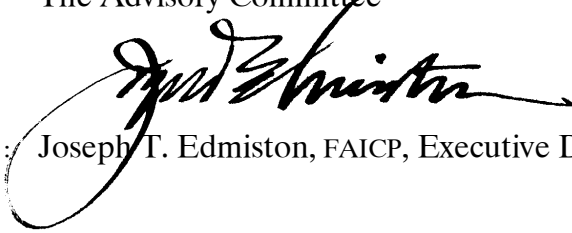


# Memorandum

To : The Conservancy  
The Advisory Committee

Date: March 27, 2006

From :  Joseph T. Edmiston, FAICP, Executive Director

Subject: **Agenda Item 14: Consideration of resolution authorizing a grant of funds to the National Park Service for planning and construction of a segment of the Backbone Trail between Etz Meloy Motorway and Encinal Canyon Road, Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Conservancy adopt the attached resolution recommending either a grant, contract, or interagency agreement with the National Park Service, or the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority as its designee, in the amount of \$125,000 of Proposition 40 and/or Proposition 50 funds, for planning and construction of a segment of the Backbone Trail between Etz Meloy Motorway and Encinal Canyon Road, Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area.

Legislative Authority: Section 33211 (c) of the Public Resources Code; or Section 33204(c) of the Public Resources Code and Joint Exercise of Powers Act, Section 6500, *et seq.* of the Government Code.

Background: Completion of the Backbone Trail is one of the highest priorities in the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area. Both land acquisition and trail construction have been a focus for the interagency efforts of the Conservancy, National Park Service, California Department of Parks and Recreation, and Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority. The project area is in the western Los Angeles County portion of the Santa Monica Mountains, roughly between Encinal Canyon Road and the Etz Meloy Motorway. The attached grant application and letter from the Superintendent of the National Recreation Area outline the project. The Conservancy funding would assist in building the trail, including environmental compliance, field surveys, engineering, trail alignment staking, alignment brushing, construction of trail tread, construction of appropriate drainage structures to minimize erosion and deposition, retaining walls, and trail signage with directional and interpretive information. With the Conservancy helping to fund this important trail construction, the Park Service then can divert some of its resources to another highly critical resource project in the mountains—the mountain lion tracking work that has to date yielded extremely important data to park agencies, which continues to inform resource management, habitat linkage and land acquisition decisions by the agencies.

Award of funding for completion of this segment of the Backbone Trail is consistent with the purposes of both Proposition 40 and Proposition 50. Proposition 40, Section 5096.650 (b) of the Public Resources Code provides funding “to the conservancies in accordance with the particular provisions of the statute creating each conservancy for the acquisition, development, rehabilitation, restoration, and protection of land and water resources . . . .”

The Backbone Trail project area lies within the Coastal Zone, in coastal watersheds draining to Santa Monica Bay. Proposition 50, Section 79570(c) of the Public Resources Code provides funds “. . . for protection of the Santa Monica Bay and Ventura County coastal watersheds , pursuant to Division 23 (commencing with Section 33000) of the Public Resources Code.” Section 79571 further provides that ten percent of allocated funds “. . . shall be used for grants for the acquisition and development of facilities to promote public access to and participation in the conservation of land, water, and wildlife resources. Eligible projects include, but are not limited to, the following: . . .” The two examples used are training facilities operated by nonprofits, and nature centers in the watersheds that provide wildlife viewing and outdoor experiences, among other features. The nationally-designated Backbone Trail certainly provides and promotes public access to and participation in land, water, and wildlife resources.

If a direct grant agreement with the National Park Service is deemed problematic, the Conservancy may (a) authorize NPS to name the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority as its designee for the Conservancy grant, with the grant to MRCA on behalf of NPS subject to approval by the Attorney General; or (b) authorize entering into an interagency agreement or contract with NPS, subject to approval by the Department of General Services.